Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Pêches et Océans Canada

ATLANTIC STURGEON

Consultations on listing under the *Species at Risk Act*

Information summary and questionnaire for consultations on adding two Atlantic Sturgeon populations to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk

November 17, 2014 to February 27, 2015

Atlantic Sturgeon:
- St. Lawrence population (Threatened)
- Maritimes population (Threatened)

We would like to receive your comments on the possibility of adding the St. Lawrence and Maritimes populations of Atlantic Sturgeon to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk.

Your comments are important.

Please fill out the questionnaire: we want to hear from you.

Canada

CONSULTATIONS
Let your opinion be heard

The purposes of the *Species at Risk Act* are to prevent the disappearance of wildlife species, to provide for their recovery and to encourage the management of special concern species. All Canadians have a role to play in the conservation of wildlife species.

Before deciding whether the St. Lawrence and Maritimes populations of Atlantic Sturgeon will be added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, we would like your opinions, comments and suggestions regarding the possible ecological, cultural and economic impacts of listing these populations under the *Species at Risk Act*.

For more information, or to fill out the online questionnaire, go to **www.sararegistry.gc.ca** under "Get Involved".

The St. Lawrence and Maritimes populations of ATLANTIC STURGEON

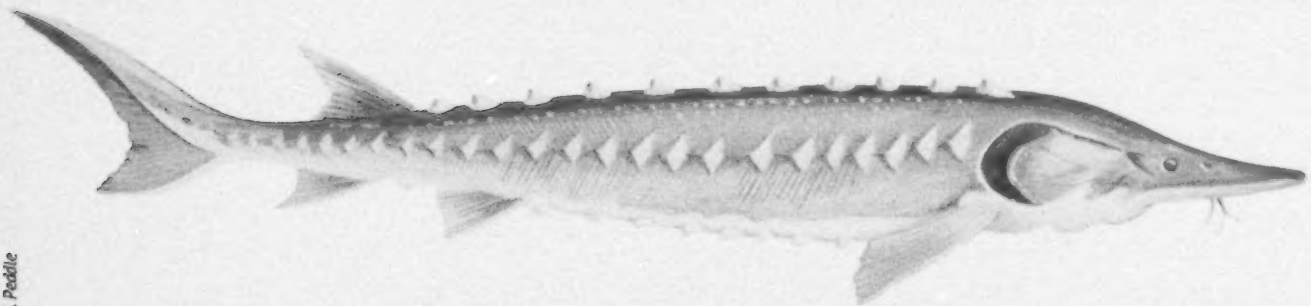
The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) divided Atlantic Sturgeon occurring in Canadian waters into two populations (St. Lawrence and Maritimes) based on precise criteria. It has been determined that these populations are distinct from one another due to differences in their genetics, ecology, migratory behaviour and life cycle.

FACTS
on Atlantic Sturgeon

Atlantic Sturgeon is a biologically significant species with its ancestry dating back some 200 million years. This fish is a long lived, anadromous species (60 years for females, 30 years for males), meaning that it resides and matures at sea, but spawns in freshwater. Atlantic Sturgeon can reach to a maximum size of 430 cm (170 in) and can weigh up to 363 kg (800 lb).

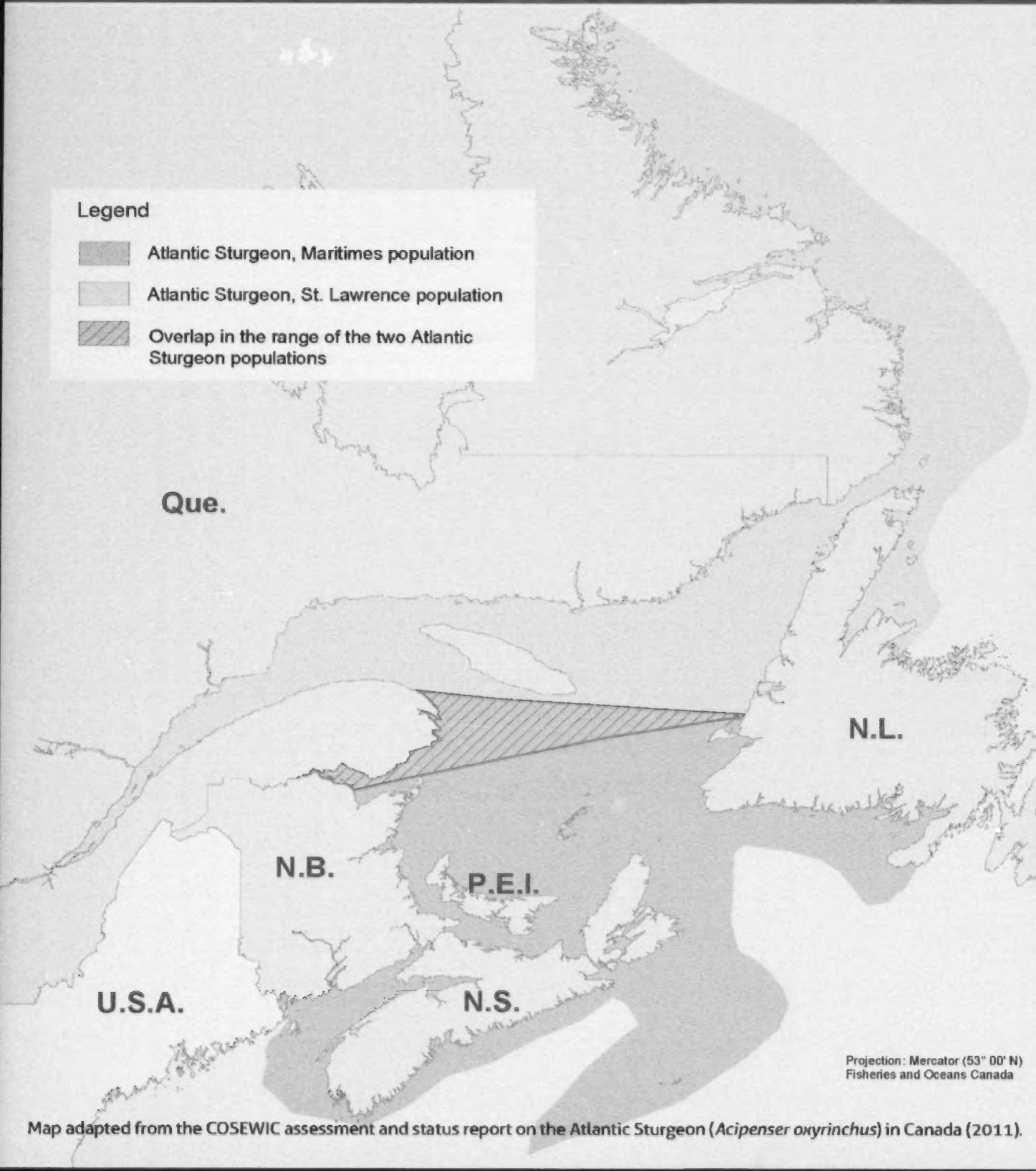
Atlantic Sturgeon occur in rivers, estuaries, the nearshore marine environment and the continental shelf regions along the Atlantic coast of North America. The species feeds primarily on worms, crustaceans and molluscs, but also on small fish and aquatic insects.

Commercially, the Atlantic Sturgeon is valued for its meat and for caviar. The trade in sturgeon meat and caviar is international.



DFO: D. Peddle

Atlantic Sturgeon populations under consultation



Map adapted from the COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Atlantic Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*) in Canada (2011).

WHY were the St. Lawrence and Maritimes populations of Atlantic Sturgeon assessed as threatened?

According to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, the abundance of these populations of Atlantic Sturgeon has declined significantly. Given its long lifespan, late maturity, and intermittent spawning, Atlantic Sturgeon is particularly susceptible to threats.

The major threats that affect Atlantic Sturgeon are commercial fisheries and habitat loss and degradation resulting mostly from dredging and dam construction. Pollution in freshwater and marine environments has also been identified as a potential threat to Atlantic Sturgeon habitat.

Current **ACTIVITIES**

In Eastern Canada, there are allocations for commercial gill-net fisheries, Aboriginal food, social and ceremonial and recreational fisheries for Atlantic Sturgeon. There is also an Atlantic Sturgeon aquaculture and processing facility in New Brunswick, which operates using wild Atlantic Sturgeon caught via the commercial fishery.

Space Jot Lje – Biodôme de Montréal

Adding a species to the LIST OF WILDLIFE SPECIES AT RISK

The process of listing a species under the *Species at Risk Act* consists of several steps. It begins with an assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and ends with a Government of Canada decision on whether or not to add a species to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk. Consultations are conducted to gather the views of Canadians, and are an important step in this process.

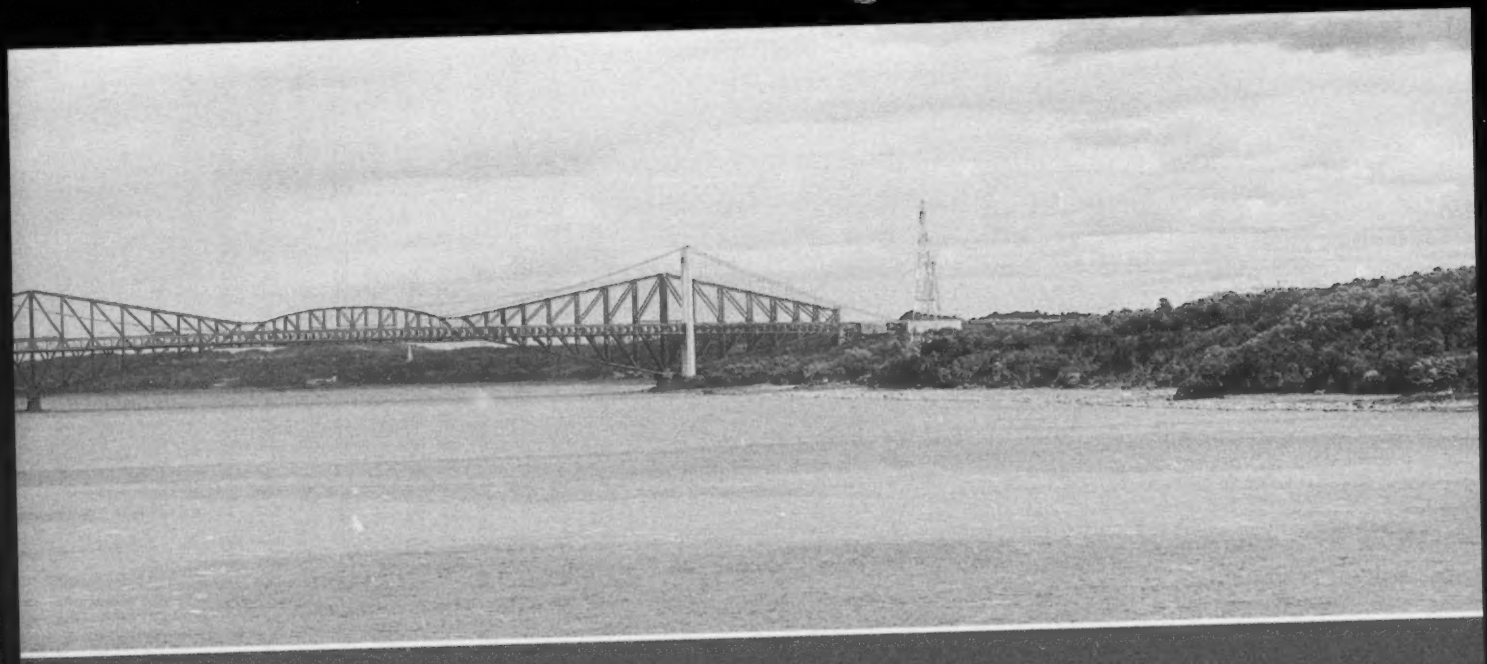
Who assigned a threatened status to the St. Lawrence and Maritimes Atlantic Sturgeon populations?

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada is an independent committee of experts that assesses and designates which wildlife species are in some danger of disappearing from Canada. The St. Lawrence and Maritimes populations of Atlantic Sturgeon in Canada were assessed as threatened in 2011. This assessment was based on the best available information, including scientific data, community knowledge and Aboriginal traditional knowledge, where available.

If a population is listed as threatened...

If the St. Lawrence or Maritimes populations of Atlantic Sturgeon are listed as threatened, automatic prohibitions will immediately come into effect and it will be illegal to kill, harm, harass, capture, possess, collect, buy, sell or trade them. A recovery strategy and subsequent action plan(s) will be developed to identify the measures to be implemented to mitigate the known threats. Critical habitat (the habitat necessary for the survival and recovery of Atlantic Sturgeon) will also be protected following its identification in a recovery strategy or action plan.

For a copy of the COSEWIC Atlantic Sturgeon Assessment and Status Report or other information, visit the **Species at Risk Public Registry: www.sararegistry.gc.ca.**



SOME ANSWERS
to your questions

Why list the St. Lawrence or Maritimes populations of Atlantic Sturgeon?

According to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada assessment, the abundance of the St. Lawrence and Maritimes populations of Atlantic Sturgeon has declined significantly and they are now considered threatened. The prohibitions that would be implemented under the *Species at Risk Act* would offer added protection. Listing would also initiate recovery planning with key partners.

Would listing the St. Lawrence or Maritimes populations of Atlantic Sturgeon impact current activities?

If an Atlantic Sturgeon population was added to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk, a directed Atlantic Sturgeon commercial fishery would be prohibited for that population. It could be possible for recreational fisheries (e.g. catch and release) or Aboriginal fisheries for food, social or ceremonial purposes to continue if it was determined that they were not jeopardizing the survival or recovery of the species. It would also be prohibited to buy, sell or trade Atlantic Sturgeon from a population that is listed under the *Species at Risk Act*. It is unlikely that Atlantic Sturgeon processing facilities would be eligible for permits or exemptions under current operating procedures. Other activities with the potential for incidentally harming Atlantic Sturgeon (e.g. by-catch in other fisheries, interactions with hydropower facilities) would be reviewed to determine if they qualify for a permit or exemption.

QUESTIONNAIRE

You can make a difference: your comments are important!

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain your comments on adding the ***Maritimes population of Atlantic Sturgeon*** *to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk.*

For more information, or to fill out the online questionnaire, go to ***www.sararegistry.gc.ca*** *under "Get Involved".*

1. Do you support adding the Maritimes population of Atlantic Sturgeon to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk? ○ Yes ○ No

   Why?

2. What could be the positive environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts of listing the Maritimes Atlantic Sturgeon?

3. What could be the negative environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts of listing the Maritimes Atlantic Sturgeon?

4. Do you have any other comments on the potential listing of the Maritimes Atlantic Sturgeon?

5. If you are answering on behalf of an Aboriginal community or organization, an industry, a small business*, an association or organization, please include its name below.

6. In what province or territory do you live? In what province or territory does your organization/association/business operate?

   Alberta

Indicate your name, contact information and your email address (optional):

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

To send this questionnaire, click on Submit or save the completed form and send it by email to SARA_LEP@dfo-mpo.gc.ca. You may also print this questionnaire (if necessary, add extra pages) and send it to:

Submit

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Species at Risk Program Management
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*Defined as any business, including its affiliates, that has fewer than 100 employees or between $30,000 and $5 million in annual gross revenues.